

September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month

Interviewing Opportunities Available by UWM and City of Milwaukee Health Department to Discuss Problem and Prevention Strategies in Addressing Infant Mortality

UWM and the City of Milwaukee Health Department are joining forces this month to provide continued information related to the growing infant mortality issue in our community.

Here are the facts:

It is shocking that each year in Milwaukee there are 235 infant deaths and stillbirths. Many of these deaths are preventable. Between 2003-2005 Milwaukee's overall infant mortality rate was 11.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, but the rate among African-Americans was significantly higher at 17 per 1,000. Racine's infant mortality rate is even higher, with a rate of 28 infant deaths per 1,000 among African-American infants.

In the 2003 Big Cities Health Inventory, (http://www.naccho.org/pubs/documents/ms001_bigcities.pdf), Milwaukee ranks poorly among other large cities in the United States in infant mortality rates and in the disparity between black white infant rates. The U.S. ranks 23rd among industrialized nations in babies dying before their first birthday-- behind Cuba, Chile, Poland and Kuwait.

Over the past 10 years, there has been virtually no improvement in Milwaukee infant mortality rates. Infant mortality is a public health crisis in Milwaukee.

Most Milwaukee infants die because of

- Prematurity and low birth weight (leading cause of infant death)
- Birth defects
- Unsafe sleep environment
- Maternal diabetes, hypertension and substance abuse

What can be done...

- Encourage more women to get early prenatal care and practice family planning
- Promote smoking cessation and a smoke-free home as a positive prenatal health behavior
- Model a safe sleeping environment: babies should sleep in a crib or Pack N' Play on their back without pillows, toys, bumper pads, or blankets.
- Screen women for depression often and help them get the care they need to overcome this debilitating condition.
- Reduce barriers to insurance inequities
- Promote quality prenatal care

How you, the media, can help to raise awareness this month:

We can arrange for any one or a combination of the following specialists to be interviewed to raise awareness and highlight what can be done to help reduce infant mortality rates.

1. Kris Barnekow, Professor, UWM, College of Health Sciences

Directs MCH-PASS Program (Preparing Academically Successful Students in Maternal and Child Health) where College minority students in Occupational Therapy and Communication Sciences and Disorders receive training to serve children with special needs and their families; also works on "Early Detection and Developmental Screening of Children Ages Birth to 3 to Detect Special Health Care Needs in Milwaukee County" (Contact: Cheri Chapman at 414-229-3225)

Can discuss:

- Preparing students on health disparities in maternal and child health, including infant mortality

- The importance of developmental screening, and how connecting with health care providers may decrease infant mortality through education and health promotion activities

2. Jennifer Runquist, Professor, UWM, College of Nursing

An expert on maternal-infant health, postpartum fatigue and depression, post partum nursing

Can discuss:

- Postpartum depression and all the resources available to moms (Contact: Cheri Chapman 414-229-3225)

3. Teresa Johnson, Professor, UWM, College of Nursing

Actively involved with March of Dimes, Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care and other organizations that focus on programs and research that support healthy pregnancies, healthy babies and healthy families

Can discuss:

- Assessing infant size at birth, assessing risk for hypoglycemia in early post-birth period, professional support for breast feeding (Contact: Cheri Chapman at 414-229-3225)

4. Mary K. Madsen, Professor, UWM, College of Health Sciences

Facilitates focus groups with young African American mothers to raise awareness of the importance of prenatal health care (Contact: Cheri Chapman at 414-229-3225)

Can discuss:

- Barriers minority women face in seeking prenatal care and existing disparities

5. Ron A. Cisler, Director, Center for Urban Population Health, Associate Professor, UWM, College of Health Sciences

Can discuss:

- Center's focus on infant mortality in urban populations, including projects that involve community agencies, e.g. City of Milwaukee Health Department, Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care, Aurora Health Care
- Team of researchers Center has assembled to further address infant mortality from a research perspective (Contact: Trina Salm at 414-219-4084)

6. Representatives from the Center and Aurora Health Care

Can discuss:

- "Safe Mom and Safe Babies" Program, a project to identify pregnant women and new mothers at risk for intimate partner violence, and provide targeted assessments, case management, education, prenatal care, advocacy and mentors and effective stage-based clinic/in-home interventions to improve the health and safety outcomes of women and their children
- Taskforce on Pre-and Inter-Conception Care led by Aurora Health Care, Inc., a planning grant to develop culturally appropriate strategies for enhancing access to pre-conception and prenatal care, and improving birth outcomes among at-risk women (Contact: Trina Salm at 414-219-4084)

7. Jill Paradowski, City of Milwaukee Health Department

Has over 35 years experience as a public health nurse for the City of Milwaukee

Can discuss:

- The importance of "safe sleep" environments for infants and provide demonstrations to primary care physicians, community and faith-based organizations (Contact: Raquel Filmanowicz at 414-286-3175)